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Intelligence Memorandum

Kenya: The Post-Kenyatta Conundrum

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Directorate of Intelligence
30 May 1972

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

Kenya: The Post-Kenyatta Conundrum

For the nearly nine years Kenya has been independent, it has enjoyed political stability under the leadership of President Jomo Kenyatta. The future is clouded, however, by the uncertainty surrounding succession. Kenyatta is over 80. Although in fairly good health, he suffered a stroke in 1968 and is said to have other maladies. There is no obvious successor, and none of the contenders even remotely approaches Kenyatta in popularity or prestige. The situation is further aggravated by the growing dissatisfaction of minority tribes with the dominance of Kenyatta's fellow Kikuyu and by the determination of the Kikuyu leaders surrounding the President to retain power after Kenyatta dies. The military has so far remained aloof from politics, but if succession is marked by prolonged political bickering and unrest, the army would be likely to intervene.

NOTE: This memorandum was prepared by the Office of Current Intelligence and coordinated with the Office of National Estimates.

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Kenyatta's Position—Past and Present



President
Jomo Kenyatta

1. President Jomo Kenyatta, the country's only president since independence in 1963, towers over the Kenyan political scene. He is both head of state and head of government, and leads the Kenya African National Union, the country's sole political party. Kenyatta is also commander in chief of the armed forces. He has no serious challengers.

2. Kenyatta, who is called Mzee (grand old man), has been in the forefront of Kenyan politics since the 1920s. He was active in Kikuyu organizations seeking social and political reform from British colonial authorities and, in 1928, was elected secretary general of the Kikuyu Central Association. He was at the time widely recognized as an African nationalist leader.

3. Kenyatta migrated to Europe in 1931. Fifteen years later, he returned home to take part in the postwar resurgence of political activity, taking over as leader of the newly formed Kenya African Union, the most important of the African nationalist organizations in Kenya. At first the union was predominantly a Kikuyu organization, but in 1950 Oginga Odinga—the leader of the Luo, the country's second largest tribe—joined the organization. By 1951 the union claimed 150,000 members.

4. Kenyatta's position as the leading Kenyan nationalist was ensured by his "martyrdom" at the hands of the British following the bloody Mau Mau uprising. The Mau Mau, a secret society made up of Kikuyus, had been conducting a campaign of violence which, in 1952, forced the British authorities to declare a state of emergency and to arrest Kenyatta on charges of leading the campaign. He and his lieutenants were sentenced to seven years' imprisonment. This silenced the Kikuyu and crushed the Mau Mau revolt. But other tribal leaders, such as Odinga and a fellow Luo, Tom Mboya, were able to keep the nationalist movement alive, largely by their repeated calls for Kenyatta's release. In 1960 the Luo and Kikuyu joined to form the Kenya African National Union. Kenyatta, who had been released from prison but was still detained in a remote place, was named president in absentia. His freedom was completely restored in 1961 after the new union had scored a decisive victory in the national election. In June 1963, Kenya was granted internal self-government, and Kenyatta became prime minister; six months later Kenya was granted its independence. In December 1964 Kenya became a republic, and Kenyatta became president.

5. Kenyatta is politically astute and widely popular. His stature has enabled him to stand above most of the tribal and other differences that

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trouble the country. In recent years he has had to face growing resentment from minority tribes because of the dominant position of the Kikuyu. He has, however, generally been able to rally the country's diverse people, in spite of their disappointment with some of his programs.

Succession and Its Problems

Tribalism

6. A number of factors stand in the way of an orderly transfer of power once Kenyatta departs. Tribalism, the single most important ingredient in Kenyan politics, poses the greatest threat. Most Kenyans live in rural areas and owe primary allegiance to their tribes. Outsiders are viewed with suspicion. As a result, most Kenyan politicians represent tribal constituencies and are identified primarily by their tribal affiliations. Recognizing that their tribes provide them with their primary means of political support, Kenyan politicians put the interests of their tribes first.

7. Tribal loyalties were submerged briefly during the struggle for independence and immediately thereafter. Kenyatta's first government included a careful balance of tribal and regional interests. Kenyatta sought to forge unity with his slogan, *Harambee* (Let's pull together). The harmony did not survive when the Kikuyu gathered a disproportionate share of the fruits of independence. Under Kenyatta, the Kikuyu are entrenched in top jobs at all levels of the government and the party, as well as in key positions in academic and business organizations.

8. As Kenya's largest tribe, the Kikuyu believe political and economic pre-eminence to be rightfully theirs. With some justification, the hard working and ambitious Kikuyu consider themselves the architects of independence. They were the first tribe to seek redress of grievances from the colonial authorities and later were the driving force in the nationalist movement. It was they who bore the brunt of British military actions to subdue the struggle for independence. The Kikuyu are Kenya's most westernized tribe, having had closer contacts with Western education and attitudes than the other tribes.

9. The assertiveness of the Kikuyu has been resented by the other tribes, particularly the Luo. A Luo, Oginga Odinga, was once vice president and minister of home affairs, and a power in the Kenya African National Union. He became something of an embarrassment to the government because of his free-wheeling activities. After being stripped of much of his

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power, Odinga, in 1966, resigned from both the government and the party to form the Kenya Peoples Union. The new party called for a quasi-Marxist, populist program to solve Kenya's problems. Many Luo, motivated more by loyalty to Odinga and the tribe than by ideology, joined Odinga's organization. Some members of parliament from Kenyatta's party also went over and promptly lost their seats in the next election.

10. The Kikuyu in recent years have stepped up their efforts to ensure continued control after Kenyatta's passing. Kikuyu representation in all levels of government is way out of proportion to the size of their community. The Kikuyu make some 20 percent of the nation's population, but they hold seven of the 22 cabinet posts. And two non-Kikuyu ministers are from the small but ethnically related Meru and Embu tribes. The Luo, with 14 percent of the population, have only three portfolios; and the Kamba, with 11 percent, hold only two posts. The Kikuyu and the Abaluyia tribe, which generally is aligned with the Kikuyu, hold more than a third of the assistant ministerships, largely sinecures for the loyal. Almost half of the permanent ministers, often the most important men in a ministry are Kikuyu, and four of the eight provincial commissioners are Kikuyu. The Kikuyu have the largest tribal representation in parliament.

11. Kenyatta's principal advisers are all Kikuyu. These advisers, named the Gatundu group after the President's country home where they meet, include Foreign Minister Njoroge Mungai, Attorney General Charles Njonjo, and Minister of State Mbiyu Koinange. Decisions are made either by Kenyatta alone or after consulting with the Gatundu group.

12. The armed forces are the only instrument of power in Kenya the Kikuyu do not control completely. Even here, they have made moves to improve their position. The Kamba tribe has long made up a large portion of the army. At the time of independence most high-ranking army officers and senior noncommissioned officers were Kamba, as were about 30 percent of the rank and file. Since then, the percentage of Kamba in the army has steadily decreased, and the number of Kikuyu has risen. Kenyatta has encouraged the recruitment of Kikuyu in large numbers, maneuvered them into officer training schools, and encouraged their rapid advancement. (As commander in chief, he personally approves all promotions and assignments for officers.) At present, the Kamba still predominate in the army's upper echelons; the army commander, deputy commander, and most field-grade officers are Kamba. The Kikuyu dominate the junior officer grades and are increasing in the enlisted ranks. The Kikuyu make up almost all of the 1,600-man General Service Unit, an elite and highly effective paramilitary arm of the police force.

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13. In their drive to consolidate their power, the Kikuyu have eliminated or neutralized important figures from rival tribes who they felt posed a threat. In July 1969, Tom Mboya, an outstanding Luo leader who was considered the most likely successor to Kenyatta, was assassinated. Most observers believe that the ruling Kikuyu clique surrounding Kenyatta planned the assassination. Mboya had gained considerable influence as a highly effective secretary general of the Kenya Africa National Union and minister of economic development, and Kikuyu leaders had long been attempting to undermine his strength, principally by weakening his control of the party mechanism. Mboya remained the principal threat to continued Kikuyu hegemony until his death.

14. A few months after Mboya's assassination, Oginga Odinga and other leaders of the Kenya Peoples Union were detained, and the party was banned. The government charged that the party had instigated anti-government disturbances in the Luo home province during a Kenyatta visit and that the party was subversive because it had received funds from Communist sources. Odinga was released in March 1971 and rejoined the Kenya Africa National Union, but he appears to have lost much of his support. In 1971, Chief Justice Mwenda and Defense Staff Chief Ndolo, both Kamba tribesmen, were implicated in a coup plot, which on the face of it looked most inept. Neither man was arrested, but Kenyatta forced both to resign. They now appear to be without influence.

15. The Kikuyu have located most government development projects in Nairobi and Central Province, their home area. In addition the tribe is making significant inroads in commerce, which was once controlled by Asians. Kikuyu farmers are also grabbing land outside their traditional tribal areas despite the claims of smaller tribes.

16. Non-Kikuyu tribal elements have naturally been antagonized by this heavy-handedness. Minority political leaders and National Assembly members have expressed fears for their future. The 1971 coup plot, involving 12 Kambas and Luos, was ill-conceived and did not represent a serious threat. Schisms trouble the non-Kikuyu tribes and have precluded any alliance against the Kikuyu. Moreover, these tribes—particularly the Luo and Kamba—are without effective leadership, largely as a result of Kikuyu actions. The minority tribes, in short, do not now appear able to challenge the well-entrenched Kikuyu, and it is unlikely they will do so in the immediate post-Kenyatta period.

17. The Kikuyu themselves are not without internal division. They differ especially over the dominance of President Kenyatta's southern branch

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of the tribe. There are also deep-rooted personal jealousies among the various leaders of Kikuyu tribes. Nevertheless, the Kikuyu have more cohesion than any of the other tribes and usually present a solid front when confronted by a non-Kikuyu challenge.

The Succession Sweepstakes

18. The Gatundu group is, of course, determined to retain power in the post-Kenyatta era. There are many Kenyans, however, who are unwilling to accept a successor dictated by this inner circle. The Gatundu group has been unable to find a Kikuyu who is amenable to their direction and possesses even a shadow of Kenyatta's popularity and prestige. The succession issue has been complicated by Kenyatta's unwillingness to groom a successor. The President instead prefers to pit one contender against the other, keeping all off balance.

Leading Contenders

19. Vice President Daniel arap Moi has several advantages. Under the constitution, the vice president becomes acting president for 90 days upon the death or incapacitation of the president, and during this time an election for a new president is to be held. Moi is competent and generally accepted by most Kenyans. He belongs to a small tribe of the Kalenjin group that poses no threat to the larger tribes. His support is therefore more broadly based than that of his rivals. A trusted lieutenant of Kenyatta, Moi has been given large responsibilities in government and party affairs by the president who has also permitted him wide public exposure.



**Vice President Daniel arap Moi
With President Kenyatta**

20. Moi as president might be little more than a figurehead, with real power resting in the Kikuyu inner circle. Despite his standing with Kenyatta, the vice president has never enjoyed the full confidence of the Gatundu group or participated extensively in its decision-making sessions. Moreover, he appears to lack the necessary political skills and sufficient backing to challenge Kikuyu hegemony.

21. Moi would be legally blocked from making any significant changes while acting president, and therefore his chances to consolidate his position during his 90 days in office would be limited. The absence of formal constitutional or party provisions for nominating a candidate to succeed

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Kenyatta as president strongly suggests the matter will be resolved in the Kikuyu inner circle. The Kikuyu may see Moi as useful in a transition period and might even support him in the election, but Moi's prospects for political longevity will diminish as the Kikuyu increase their political strength.



Foreign Minister
Njoroge Mungai

22. Foreign Minister Njoroge Mungai is the most likely of the Kikuyu aspirants for Kenyatta's mantle. Mungai is a member of the Gatundu clique. He is also Kenyatta's personal physician, his nephew, and close adviser. He has been engaged in an image-building campaign since he became foreign minister in January 1970. Mungai has received extensive local publicity for his verbal attacks on white southern Africa, his efforts to promote African unity, and his attendance at various international conferences.

But Mungai faces major obstacles. He enjoys little popularity outside his own constituency.

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Nevertheless, after Ken-

yatta's passing, Mungai would be the most likely candidate of the Gatundu group.

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Dark Horses and King Makers

23. As for the other members of the ruling circle, most have little political support of their own and owe their positions to the President. Figures like Attorney General Njonjo and Minister of State Koinange, however, could wield influence behind the scenes after Kenyatta's death.

24. Outside the ruling group several politicians possess national or tribal followings. When Kenyatta dies, these individuals may move to challenge the Kikuyu clique, either as candidates themselves or in alliances. Most of these men are wary of launching a challenge now because of the all-too-obvious risks involved.



Mbiyu Koinange



Charles Njonjo

25. J. M. Kariuki, the assistant minister of tourism and wildlife, is the only politician who openly admits that he is campaigning for the succession. Kariuki, [redacted] says that as a result of his political activity he is in danger of being detained or even assassinated. He professes to be undeterred. Although a Kikuyu and a veteran of the Mau Mau revolt, Kariuki is not in good standing with the Kikuyu establishment. For one thing, he is from the northern branch of the tribe. Also, the inner

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Josiah Kariuki

circle believes Kariuki spends too much time with the Luo. Kariuki, who appears well financed, has attracted a large following from all tribes by his attacks on the government for its failure to do more for the have-nots.

26. Kariuki is having difficulty keeping in the public eye. His duties give him few opportunities for public appearances, and the newspapers, sensitive to government opinion, are reluctant to provide him coverage. Kenyatta has ordered that Kariuki be denied the licenses needed to hold public meetings in rural areas. In a free election for the presidency, Kariuki would give Moi a good fight and probably would outdistance Mungai.

27. Mwai Kibaki, the minister of finance and economic planning, who is also from the northern wing of the Kikuyu tribe, appears to be gaining ground as a compromise candidate. He seems acceptable to both the northern and southern Kikuyu and, like Kariuki, is popular among non-Kikuyu tribes. Kibaki also is an intelligent, talented, and energetic administrator. So far, however, he has shown little desire to compete for the presidency, and he generally shies away from back-room maneuverings.

Minister for Finance
Kibaki

28. Oginga Odinga no longer appears to have much chance. As a result of his detention, [redacted] he appears to have lost much of his support. Although Luo members of parliament pledged to give up a seat to Odinga, none has stepped aside. Odinga had hopes of a government post, but so far Kenyatta has refused to have anything to do with him. Odinga does retain a residue of popularity throughout the country among the economically discontented, and he could swing support to someone like Kariuki. It is improbable, however, that the Kikuyu establishment, which has been encouraging dissension among the Luo by pushing Odinga's rivals, would permit the former vice president to re-enter the political arena.



Oginga Odinga

Growing Awareness of the Military

29. Except for former defense staff chief Ndolo, the uniformed services have so far remained aloof from politics. Both the military and the police are led by well-trained officers with a deep aversion to political action. The incessant maneuvering and the uncertainty over succession, as well as the obvious attempts by the Gatundu group to advance their fellow tribesmen in the military, are slowly eroding this stand, and tribal enmity within the military is increasing. Top officers, particularly those from the Kamba tribe, are wary of the Kikuyu ascendancy.

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J. K. Mulinge

30. Major General Jackson Mulinge, the army commander and the senior military officer, seems inclined to preserve the military's non-political image. Mulinge, a Kamba, is thought to be loyal to Kenyatta and to have no political ambitions.

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31. Most of the officers below Mulinge seem loyal to the government, and there is little chance of a military coup while Kenyatta is alive. There has been more grumbling over government corruption and tribal favoritism, but, for the most part, this has been confined to the barracks and mess halls. If the succession is marked by prolonged political squabbling and unrest, the chances for military intervention will increase markedly.

32. Kenyatta and his associates, well aware of the political potential of the military, have deliberately recruited more and more Kikuyu into the military. They can also rely on the paramilitary police force, the General Service Unit, to discourage a military coup. This well-equipped and well-trained unit has important elements stationed near the capital and is almost wholly Kikuyu. Although the 1,600-man General Service Unit is outnumbered by the 5,000-man army, the paramilitary force could hold its own in a fight with the regular military. Kenyatta has attempted to retain this parity by preventing the army's acquisition of some modern weapons.

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Outlook

33. Regardless of who follows Kenyatta, there doubtless will be some changes. Without Kenyatta's strong hand and towering presence the new government is likely to be troubled by maneuvering, division, and threats to its position that could bring on more repressive domestic policies. The new administration will probably also come under increasing pressures as a result of domestic problems. The Kenyatta government has taken little action to deal with the high rate of population growth and rising unemployment and the pace of land redistribution has been slow.

34. A successor government free from controls of the Kikuyu inner circle might feel so insecure that it would react to these pressures by making significant policy changes. It might assume a more aggressive stand on

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foreign investment, become more nationalistic, and adopt a more "progressive" foreign policy by increasing support to southern African liberation groups, voting more consistently with leftist countries in international forums, lowering barriers to aid offers, and welcoming other overtures from the Communist world.

35. A post-Kenyatta government dominated by the Gatundu group, however, would probably be less responsive to these pressures. It might move Kenya's essentially pragmatic economic and foreign policies a few degrees to the left, but would be unlikely to take the country far from its traditional position in the ideological center of black African states.

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